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We all are familiar with the basic attributes and actions a Leader must possess — Be, Know and Do. We also know that discipline refers to having the self control to enforce obedience and standards, even when no one is watching. But what exactly is a standard? Webster's defines it as "something established by authority, custom or general consent as a model or example."

Our Army is a standards-based organization with customs dating back centuries. Our standards for conduct, military courtesy and laws governing our operations are well documented. There is a rule or a standard for almost everything we do. If standards exist, then why do we still see so many acts of indiscipline directly violating those standards?

I believe, as many of you do, that the safety climate and culture of a unit is determined by the command but best displayed in the individual actions of our Soldiers when no one is watching them. Our Soldiers know in their hearts and minds what is right but oftentimes disregard the known standard, opting for an easier way to perform a task.

Easier doesn't always mean quicker or with less effort. Sometimes it can mean a concerted effort to circumvent a known standard, which often results in destruction of property, injury or, even worse, death.

During a recent senior safety symposium, Command Sgt. Maj. Neil Ciotola, III Corps and Fort Hood command sergeant major, gave a presentation in which he discussed standards and why enforcing standards is so critical to the good order of the Army. In celebrating the Year of the NCO, it was only fitting to have one of our Army's senior NCOs share his observations from his long, distinguished career as a Leader. Ciotola said, "Our troopers want to do the right thing, but many have said, 'Why bother? We know that no one will be checking up on us.'"

How can this be? As Leaders, we know that we are responsible for the safety and well-being of everyone assigned to our organizations, including our civilians and Family members. Given the high stakes involved, how can we afford not to be engaged with our Soldiers, civilians and Families?

Ciotola went on to ask the audience how many had a son or daughter currently serving in the armed forces. As the hands proudly shot into the air, Ciotola's countenance changed from cheerful to concern.

"This is exactly why we, as Leaders and safety professionals, must be engaged," he said. "We owe it to our Families to protect its most precious entrusted gift — its sons and daughters."

It is through leadership at every level that we can affect those measures that keep our Soldiers and civilians safe every day. And through educating the various echelons of leadership, they are able to extend that safety net to encompass Families. Leadership is not something left at the

office, motor pool or flight line when we go home. It is what we do every day, on and off duty, by setting the example and committing ourselves to what's right because that's what our Army Family demands of us.

If you think one individual cannot change the climate of a unit, just look around. Your actions will speak louder than your words every time, so never pass up an opportunity to positively influence those around you. If you want to figure out where you can help your unit, battalion commanders can reevaluate or better examine the safety climate and culture of their organization through the Army Readiness Assessment Program tool found on the U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center's Web site. It's another method the command can use to strengthen its formation.

As Leaders, we must all know the standard, be the standard setter and, most importantly, enforce the standard.

Army Safe is Army Strong!

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Commanding